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ABSTRACT

The digest addresses, in question-and-answer format, ways to promote peer acceptance of handicapped students. Topics covered include the effects of first impressions on nonhandicapped students and the impact of physical proximity, and the nature of interdependence among students' learning goals and rewards as structured by the teacher. A comparison of the dynamics of a cooperative learning situation and a competitive or individualistic one highlights the ways in which a cooperative situation fosters an atmosphere of trust and higher valuing of classmates. Regular class teachers are urged to teach social skills by carefully planned modeling programs in which accurate information about handicaps replaces fears and prejudice. The importance of teaching handicapped students such skills as accepting responsibility for their actions, following instruction, and resisting peer pressure is stressed. The digest concludes with a note on the importance of individualized instruction for basic skills, time management, study habits, and other skills. An attached bibliography lists 25 sources on the topic. (CL)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
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1984
DIGEST

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FOSTERING PEER ACCEPTANCE OF HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

What are the prevailing feelings of nonhandicapped students toward their handicapped classmates?

When mainstreaming begins and handicapped students enter the regular classroom, nonhandicapped students form an initial impression of their handicapped classmates, categorize the observable characteristics, and attach labels to the categories. The labels of "mentally retarded," "learning disabled," "emotionally disturbed," "hearing impaired," and so forth, have negative connotations that carry stigmas. From the beginning, therefore, handicapped students are perceived somewhat negatively, and this perception sets up a strong possibility of rejection by nonhandicapped peers.

The physical proximity between handicapped and nonhandicapped students, created by placing them in the same classroom, is the beginning of an opportunity, but like all opportunities, it carries a risk of making things worse as well as the possibility of making things better. Physical proximity does not mean that stigmatization, stereotyping, and rejection of handicapped peers by nonhandicapped students will automatically result, or that handicapped students will automatically be included in the peer relationships with nonhandicapped classmates necessary for maximum achievement and healthy social development (Johnson & Johnson, 1980).

What is the relationship between acceptance, rejection, and the learning situation?

Whether interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped students results in a process of acceptance or rejection is determined in part by the type of interdependence among students' learning goals and rewards that is structured by the teacher. Within any learning situation, a teacher can structure positive goal interdependence (i.e., cooperation), negative goal interdependence (i.e., competition), or no goal interdependence (i.e., individualistic efforts) (Johnson & Johnson, 1975). In a *cooperative* learning situation, students work together to achieve the goal. Students can achieve their learning goal if, and only if, the other students with whom they are cooperatively linked achieve their learning goal. In a *competitive* learning situation, one student can obtain his or her goal only if the other students with whom he or she is competitively linked fail to obtain their learning goal. In an *individualistic* learning situation, the goal achievement of each student is unrelated to the goal attainment of others; there is no correlation among students' goal attainment. The students' success is contingent on their own performance irrespective of the quality of performance of others (Johnson & Johnson, 1980).

What are the dynamics of a cooperative learning situation?

A cooperative learning situation benefits all students. Working cooperatively with peers provides:

- More direct face to face interaction among students.
- An expectation that one's peers will facilitate one's learning.
- More peer pressure toward achievement and appropriate classroom behavior.
- More reciprocal communication and fewer difficulties in communicating with each other.
- More actual helping, tutoring, assisting, and general facilitation of each other's learning.
- More open mindedness to peers and willingness to be influenced by their ideas and information.
- More positive feedback to and reinforcement of each other.
- Less hostility, both verbal and physical, expressed toward peers.

Cooperation also creates perceptions and feelings of:

- Higher trust in other students.
- More mutual concern and friendliness for other students, more attentiveness to peers, more feelings of obligation to and responsibility for classmates, and desire to win the respect of other students.
- Stronger beliefs that one is liked, supported, and accepted by other students, and that other students care about how much one learns and want to help one learn.
- Lower fear of failure and higher psychological safety.
- Higher valuing of classmates.
- Greater feelings of success (Johnson & Johnson, 1980).

What are the dynamics of a competitive or individualistic learning situation?

When interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped students is competitive, students:

- Have little face to face interaction.
- Expect peers to impede the achievement of their learning goals.
- Face peer pressure against achievement and appropriate classroom behavior.
- Communicate inaccurate information and frequently misunderstand each other.
- Are closed minded to and unwilling to be influenced by peers.
- Give each other negative feedback.
- Express verbal and physical hostility toward peers.

EC 180 906

In both learning situations there are perceptions and feelings of:

- Distrust for other students.
- Higher fear of failure and more feelings of failure.
- Less mutual concern and feelings of responsibility for peers.
- Being rejected and disliked by classmates.

Both competitive and individualistic learning activities provide little or no information about handicapped peers, thus allowing initial stereotypes to continue. What little information is available is likely to confirm existing impressions that handicapped peers are "losers." The boundaries of the handicap are not clarified (Johnson & Johnson, 1980).

How can regular education teachers become facilitators of mainstreamed classrooms promoting social interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped students?

Social skills can be taught by carefully planned modeling programs. Regular education teachers can become successful facilitators of mainstreamed classrooms through the use of social skill instruction and the use of appropriate individualized instructional methods. For handicapped students:

- Appropriate behaviors need to be modeled. Handicapped students need the opportunity to practice demonstrated behaviors.
- Appropriate behaviors need to be prompted. Handicapped students need the opportunity to correct behavior when signaled.
- Appropriate feedback needs to be given to supply corrective guidance to the handicapped students.

Nonhandicapped students become more accepting when given factual information about handicapping conditions and handicapped individuals (Schumaker, Hazel, Sherman, & Sheldon, 1982). Accurate information needs to be provided to replace the fears and prejudices cultivated by ignorance (Day, Fox, Shores, Lindeman, & Stowitschek, 1983; Gresham, 1982). Most importantly, the instructional process needs to be individualized for both handicapped and nonhandicapped students.

What social skills should be taught to handicapped students?

Teachers need to equip students with the necessary skills to effectively demonstrate sensitivity, responsiveness, and generosity during peer interaction (Combs & Slaby, 1977). These skills include accepting responsibility for actions, problem solving, negotiation, conversation, following instructions, accepting positive feedback, accepting negative f[illegible], giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, [illegible]ng peer pressure, and both cognitive and affective role-taking skills.

What areas of instruction should be individualized for both handicapped and nonhandicapped students?

The proper individualization of instruction will make it possible for mainstreaming to provide handicapped and nonhandicapped students with their least restrictive environments and least restrictive alternatives. The learning situation has a direct relationship with acceptance and/or rejection. All students could benefit from individualized instruction in basic skills, higher level skills, management procedures, time management, use of materials and equipment, note taking, and study habits.

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Combs, M. L., & Slaby, D. A. (1977). Social skills training with children. In B. B. Lahey & A. E. Kazdin (Eds.), *Advances in Clinical Child Psychology*. (pp. 161–201). New York: Plenum Press.

Day, R. M., Fox, J. J., Shores, R. E., Lindeman, D. P., & Stowitschek, J. J. (1983). The social competence intervention project: Developing educational procedures for teaching social interaction skills to handicapped children. *Behavioral Disorders, 8*, 120–127.

Gresham, F. M. (1982). Misguided mainstreaming: The case for social skills training with handicapped children. *Exceptional Children, 48*, 422–433.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. (1975). *Learning together and alone: Cooperation, competition, and individualization*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Johnson, R. & Johnson, D. W. (1980). The social integration of handicapped students into the mainstream. In Maynard C. Reynolds (ed.), *Social environment of the schools*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children. Stock No. 206, Price $4.50.

Schumaker, J. B., Hazel, J. S., Sherman, J. A., & Sheldon, J. (1982). Social skill performances of learning disabled, nonlearning disabled, and delinquent adolescents. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 5*, 388–397.

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1985
MINIBIBLIOGRAPHY

A MINIBIBLIOGRAPHY ON PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DISABLED

Handicapism and Equal Opportunity: Teaching About the Disabled in Social Studies by James P. Shaver and Charles K. Curtis, 1981. 85 pp. $6.00. Stock No. 272.

The reference text is designed to help junior and senior high school teachers to integrate teaching about the handicapped into their social studies curriculum.

Available from:
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Learning About Disabilities by Rita Ann Popp. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, Winter 1983, 15(2), pp. 78-81, $4.00 per issue.

The author describes lessons provided for regular class elementary students to help them understand disabilities and disabled persons.

Available from: See listing above.

Handicapism: A Slide Show

Intended for adults, the package of 139 slides and a script attempts to change attitudes toward handicapped individuals.

Available from:
Human Policy Press
P.O. Box 127 University Station
Syracuse, NY 13210

Helping Children Understand the Child with Special Needs by Margaret E. Cleary. *Children Today*, August 1976, 5(4), 6-10.

Source:
Children Today
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Kids on the Block.

A curriculum featuring life-sized puppets with various disabilities. A number of school systems have purchased these sets. If your school does not have access to the puppets, contact:

Kids on the Block, Inc.
822 N. Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
1-800-368-KIDS

No More Special Me. By the Kids on the Block, Inc. 1981.

A film/videotape featuring life-sized puppets who perform for children and correct some of their misconceptions about mental retardation, blindness, cerebral palsy, and deafness.

Available from: See listing above.

Like You, Like Me

Intended for children in kindergarten through intermediate grades, the set of ten 16mm films is designed to promote acceptance of epilepsy, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, physical handicap, speech and hearing impairment, blindness, and asthma.

Available from:
Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation
425 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611
$140.000 per film/$1120.00 for the series of ten films
Also available in videocassette at same price

Mainstreaming Children with Special Needs: Using Puppetry, Dramatic Play, and Literature to Help Young Children Understand Handicaps by Jeannie M. Hamrin, 1981, 19 pp.

Presented are some affective educational activities for young children who may be in a mainstreamed setting.

Available from:
ERIC Document Reproduction Service
3900 Wheeler Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
Order No. ED 207 320

My New Friend (Introducing the Special Child) by P.J. Hancock et al., 1977.

The series of sound filmstrips uses a child narrator to describe four handicapped children, the resulting change(s) in appearance or behavior, and the means of helping the children adjust to the regular school setting.

Available from:
Nystrom/Eye Gate Media
3333 Elston Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618
800/621-8086
$75.00 per set (Order No. TE848)

Notes from a Different Drummer by Barbara H. Baskin and Karen Harris, 1978, 375 pp.

Summarized is juvenile fiction portraying the handicapped in books for ages 5 to adult.

Available from:
R.R. Bowker Company
1180 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

People . . . . Just Like You. About Handicaps and Handicapped People. (An Activity Guide.) 1978.

The document outlines activities for students in grades K-12 designed to teach children about the needs and capabilities of handicapped individuals.

Available from:
Committee on Youth Development
President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped
Washington, DC 20210
Free

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Please Know Me As I Am: A Guide to Helping Children Understand the Child with Special Needs by Margaret E. Cleary, 1975, 63 pp.

Presented is a guide for teaching elementary school children to understand classmates and others with special needs.

Available from:
ERIC Document Reproduction Service
3900 Wheeler Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
Order No. ED 112 630

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Program Manual, Assessment Instruments, Scope and Sequence Chart, and Resource File by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 128 pp. $38.00 complete set. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. ED 210 855.

The document contains materials needed to implement Project C H A N G E., a curriculum designed to improve attitudes of children in Grades K through 8.
Available from:

Ridgeland Public Schools District 122	or ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS)
6500 West 95th Street	3900 Wheeler Avenue
Oak Lawn, IL 60453	Alexandria, VA 22304

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Media Assessment List by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 235 pp., $20.00. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. ED 210 854.

The major portion of the document consists of forms describing required and supplemental student materials arranged according to study units and grade level (K through 8).

Available from: See first Project C H A N G E. listing above.

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Junior High Curriculum (7-8) by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 280 pp. $16.00 per grade level. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. 210 853.

Available from: See first Project C H A N G E. listing above.

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Intermediate Curriculum (4-6) by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 362 pp. $16.00 per grade level. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. 210 852.

Available from: See first Project C H A N G E. listing above.

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Primary Curriculum (K-3) by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 464 pp., $16.00 per grade level. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. ED 210 851.

Available from: See first Project C H A N G E. listing above.

Project C.H.A.N.G.E. Concepts of Handicaps and Attitudes Need Guidance and Education. Teacher Training Program by M. Sherry Smith and others. 1981. 306 pp., $20.00. Microfiche only—EDRS Order No. ED 210 850.

The document presents information on installation and management of the inservice teacher training component, audiovisual materials for the teacher training program, and the content of the teacher training program.

Available from: See first Project C H A N G E. listing above.

Special People: A Brighter Future for Everyone with Physical, Mental, and Emotional Disabilities by Shirley Cohen. 1977. 177 pp.

To sensitize normal persons to the needs of handicapped individuals, the author sketches the position of the handicapped in our society.

Available from:
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs, NY 07632

Understanding Handicaps: A Curriculum for Changing Students' Attitudes Toward the Disabled by Patricia B. Del Val and others. 1981. 20 pp. Order No. ED 232 367.

The curriculum guide presents information on a six-unit program designed to help nonhandicapped fourth graders understand handicaps and accept children with handicaps.
Available from:
ERIC Document Reproduction Service
3900 Wheeler Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304

Mainstreaming the Regular Classroom Student by Michael Kahn. 1981. 14 pp. Order No. ED 217 605.

The paper presents activities, suggested by regular classroom teachers, to help prepare the regular classroom student for mainstreaming.
Available from: See listing above.

Visual Impairment: Accepting Individual Differences by Shirley Cohen and others. 1977. 71 pp. $6.50 kit price.

Includes 5 manuals, 4 student workbooks, 1 cassette, and flip book "Visual Impairment."
Available from:
New York State Education Dept.
Publications Sales Desk
Room 164 EBA
Albany, NY 12234

Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities: Accepting Individual Differences and **Amy Can Learn** by Shirley Cohen and others. 1977. 68 pp. $6.50 kit price.

Includes 5 manuals, 4 student workbooks, 1 cassette, and flip book "Amy Can Learn."
Available from: See listing above.

Motor Impairment: Accepting Individual Differences and **I Knew I Could Do It** by Shirley Cohen and others. 1977. 65 pp. $6.50 kit price.

Includes 5 manuals, 4 student workbooks, 1 cassette, and flip book "I Knew I Could Do It."
Available from: See listing above.

Hearing Impairment: Accepting Individual Differences and **Can You Hear Me?** by Shirley Cohen and others. 1977. 71 pp. $6.50 kit price.

Includes 5 manuals, 4 student workbooks, 1 cassette, and flip book "Can You Hear Me?"
Available from: See listing above.

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